

CJTF-HOA Motor Vehicle Drivers Safety Course

CJTF-HOA MOTOR TRANSPORTATION

SPECIAL TO THE HORN COURIER

NEWS FLASH: Driving in this AOR is not like driving in the States. Aside from the obvious differences like camels or goats strolling across the road unannounced and seemingly without a care in the world as to who has the right of way, the road conditions, the lighting and the drivers themselves present unique challenges for the safe operation of a vehicle.

These unpredictable conditions as well as driver inexperience in dealing with them contributed early on to a rash of motor vehicle accidents. The Commanding Officers of CJTF-HOA and Camp Lemonnier saw that something needed to be done to better safeguard both the troops and property entrusted to their care.

After consulting with the respective Safety Office professionals, the CO's directed that a Motor Vehicle Drivers Safety Course (MVDSC) be established and implemented without delay.

The first question was "how do we get one off the ground?" In the States, such a question could be answered relatively easily. The Command could have drawn from any number of Federal, State, or private safety training centers to get the ball rolling. However, here in the AOR, those resources were not readily available.

But this lack of an easy solution did not deter the troops entrusted to provide, create and implement the best MVDSC. After much research, it was determined that a company out of Uganda, named "On Course Consultancy Limited (OCCL)" provided a comprehensive "Professional Drivers Course." This course was designed to teach those who attended it the fundamentals of good driving habits with an emphasis on safe motor vehicle operation here in Africa.

Gunnery Sgt. Jeffrey R. Hollifield of Camp Lemonnier was chosen to attend the intensive one week course. When he returned from the training, he, along with Gunnery Sgt. Aaron VanNostrand, also of Camp Lemonnier, and Chief Warrant Officer Bruce Pettus of HOA set to work in designing and implementing the MVDSC. Their challenge was to design a course which taught students the fundamentals of safe vehicle operations and the policies, regulations and procedures while here in the



Sgt. Brian E. McElaney

Chief Petty Officer Darin Runge, Religious Programming Chief, Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, navigates the streets of Djibouti City as a local cab driver swerves into the oncoming lanes. Traffic in the Horn of Africa, especially in urban areas, is often chaotic and requires not only superior driving skills, but the ability to make driving decisions quickly. The CJTF Motor Vehicle Drivers Safety Course teaches, and tests, both.

Horn of Africa.

Using their own vast experience gained both in the class room and the field, they decided that the course would be most effective if it provided the students with a section dedicated to instruction as well as one which allowed the students to practically apply what they had just learned. In order to successfully complete the course, students must pass both a written test as well as a practical road test which is observed and graded by one of the instructors.

The fundamentals portion of the class, which lasts approximately 2 ½ hours, teaches students about proper braking, effective use of the 4WD system of the vehicle, rollover prevention and accident avoidance through awareness.

Once the classroom portion is complete, the students then are required to take a road and skills test in a vehicle. This test is designed to ensure that the operators of vehicles are capable of handling the vehicle in a safe and controlled manner. The instructors look for good driving habits and test the students' skills in performing some rather exacting driving maneuvers, all of which are

designed to keep the students and their passengers alive while driving in the AOR.

Since its inception, the MVDSC has successfully trained 477 students. Each student, upon completion of the course receives a Drivers Safety Completion Card. This card is a quick and easy way to show that the holder of it has taken and passed the MVDSC, which is mandatory, for all personnel who operate a vehicle within the AOR.

HOA's new Commanding Officer Major General Ghormley is a strong supporter of the course and sees it as a practical way to train troops here in the AOR and equip them with the tools to protect themselves and others from unnecessary injury. In addition, Major General Ghormley and Colonel Dungan of Camp Lemonnier see the MVDSC as a cornerstone in reaching their goal to cut the number of vehicle mishaps in half. Though it is still too early to quantify the overall impact of the course, judging from the positive feedback received from those who have taken it, the half a day invested in it is already paying dividends in the form of greater driver awareness to the unique challenges for safe driving here in this AOR.

The Horn Courier



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Photo by:
1st Lt. Tim Wade
Members from the 747th Engineering Detachment work to free up a stoppage at a well in Djibouti. The well drillers often have to overcome numerous obstacles to accomplish their mission.

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